



DISTRICT DIRECTORS ENGAGING & SERVING

OACD Annual State Meeting

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Oklahoma Conservation Commission

WHAT WAS YOUR MOTIVATION TO BECOME A CONSERVATION DISTRICT DIRECTOR?



An aerial photograph showing a straight road lined with mature green trees. To the left of the road is a vibrant yellow field, likely rapeseed, and to the right is a lush green field. The trees cast long, dark shadows onto the green field to their right.

REASONS TO SERVE

1. YOU'RE NEEDED
2. BUILD A COMMUNITY
3. WELLBEING BOOSTER
4. A LEARNING ROAD
5. SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY
6. GAIN FIRST-HAND WORK EXPERIENCE
7. SELF-ESTEEM BUILDER
8. GIVE BACK SELFLESSLY
9. TEAMWORK FOR THE COMMUNITY
10. MAKING A DIFFERENCE

**LIST THE TOP 3 THINGS YOU WOULD LIKE
FOR THE DISTRICT TO ACCOMPLISH.**



WHAT IS YOUR DISTRICT'S MISSION?

Title 27A – Oklahoma Statutes

It is the policy of the Legislature to authorize conservation districts established under the Conservation District Act to serve as the primary local unit of government responsible for the conservation of the renewable natural resources of this state, and competent to administer, in close cooperation with landowners and occupiers, with local governmental units, and with agencies of the government of this state and of the United States, projects, programs and activities suitable for effectuating the policy of the Conservation District Act.



DISTRICT POWERS AND AUTHORITIES

- Conduct surveys and investigations relating to the conservation of renewable natural resources
- Carry out preventive and control measures; and works of improvement
- Conduct operations in order to demonstrate by example the means, methods, and measures by which conservation may be carried out
- Enter into written agreements



DISTRICT POWERS AND AUTHORITIES

- Obtain options to acquire any property, real or personal, or rights or interest therein; to maintain, administer and improve any properties
- Make available, on such terms as it shall prescribe to landowners and occupiers, within the district, agricultural and engineering machinery and equipment, fertilizer, seeds and seedlings, and such other material and equipment
- Construct, improve, repair, operate and maintain such structures as may be necessary or convenient for the performance of any of the operations or activities authorized by the Conservation District Act



DISTRICT POWERS AND AUTHORITIES

- Develop resource conservation programs (long range plans) and annual plans of work
- Acquire by purchase, lease or otherwise, and to administer any project or program concerned with the conservation of renewable natural resources located within its boundaries undertaken by any federal, state or other public agency
- Sue and be sued in the name of the district
- Carry workers' compensation insurance



DISTRICT STRUCTURE / PARTNERSHIPS

DIRECTOR RESPONSIBILITIES

- Personnel
- Meetings
- Financial
- Programs



EXECUTIVE SESSION

- Discussing the employment, hiring, appointment, promotion, demotion, disciplining or resignation of any individual salaried public officer or employee;
- Discussing the purchase or appraisal of real property;
- Confidential communications between a public body and its attorney concerning a pending investigation, claim, or action if the public body, with the advice of its attorney;
- Discussing any matter where disclosure of information would violate confidentiality requirements of state or federal law;



If a public body proposes to conduct an executive session, the agenda shall:

- contain sufficient information for the public to ascertain that an executive session will be proposed,
- identify the items of business and purposes of the executive session, and
- state specifically the provision of Section 307 of this title authorizing the executive session.



FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES



➤ Oversight / Checks and Balances

- Tax Reports
- Bank Statements

➤ District Operating Expense Allocations

- Based on Performance

➤ All funds are state funds



District Programs

- Cost Share
- Watersheds
- Soil Health
- Others

Scenario 1

Until recently, the district administrator was the only person who signed district checks. However, the chairman of the board said he heard it was a good idea to have two signatures on the checks, so his name was added to the signature card at the local bank. But you heard the district administrator tell him that they didn't want to have to bother him every time they needed a check signed, so they would just have him sign several blank checks and leave them in the checkbook until needed. The chairman agreed that was fine.



Solution 1

BETTER

If the administrator is allowed to sign checks, a second signature should be required. This second signature should always be a board member. Anyone authorized to sign checks must be covered by the district's surety bond.

BEST

The administrator should not have signature authority for checks. Only board members covered by the district's surety bond should be authorized and allowed to sign checks.

WHY

Segregation of duties is a key principle in financial control, aiming to reduce the risk of fraud and error. Processes should be broken down so that no single person is responsible for every stage in a process.

Scenario 2

A former long-term serving district director has passed away. The board instructs the district administrator to send flowers on the district's behalf for the funeral. When you asked how these should be paid for, the chair instructs the administrator to use the district's local funds to make the purchase.



Solution 2

ONLY OPTION

The flowers should be paid for by the board and staff using their personal funds, not the local funds of the district.

WHY

District locally earned funds are public monies and must be expended in keeping with the same laws and rules that apply to state (i.e. Commission allocated) funds.

Expenditures must promote conservation and the conservation programs of the district.

Scenario 3

You know the district technician has a district-provided cell phone. In addition to the \$40 per month line charge, his data charges have far exceeded the included 10 GB limit for the past several months. The overage charges are billed at \$10 / GB making the bill each month between \$60 and \$100. To date no one has questioned during a board meeting why the bill is so high or why data use is exceeding 10 GB each month.



Solution 3

BETTER

Discuss with the technician and chair your concerns about the bill being repeatedly higher than anticipated. Make sure that the technician is aware of the provided allowance and usage guidelines.

BEST

Request an agenda item be added to address and review the repeatedly high bill. If needed, the board can take action to upgrade to more data or review with the technician expected usage procedures and guidelines. Continue to review the bill each month.

WHY

Failure to monitor use of district provided devices and failure to review expenses costs the district money.

Scenario 4

At board meetings, the chairman seems to fly over the financial statements, checking account statements, bills to be paid and related documents. You have seen financial statements at previous board meetings, but you are not really sure that you understand what all the numbers mean. The chairman always calls for a motion, second and vote before you have had time to digest the figures. One time a director mentioned he would like to see the canceled checks and voided checks as well as the receipts to match to the credit card statement, but the chairman said that it would be too time consuming and to “just let the administrator worry about those.”



Solution 4

BETTER

Request that the financials be provided prior to the meeting and discuss with the chair that time for discussion needs to be allowed.

BEST

During board meeting, ask questions about any item on the financials that is unclear. Request to see invoices, cancelled checks, etc.; abstain from voting if questions are not answered.

WHY

Careful review of the financials helps limit the occurrence of fraud and misuse of district funds.

Scenario 5

Several cooperators have told you that the technician, after he finished sprigging tracts, will go to the landowners' homes, and strongly encourage them to pay him for the work in cash. The technician tells the cooperators that he will make sure that the district gets the money; he claims that this saves the district a bunch of paperwork. The administrator has no idea what the technician does in the field, and they do not know on whose land he is working each day.



Solution 5

BETTER

Discuss with the technician and chairman that all work done using district equipment and during district working hours must be billed/reported.

BEST

Discuss with the technician during an executive session that all work done using district equipment and during working hours must be billed/reported.

WHY

Unreported cash payments cost the district money and tarnish the district's reputation.

Scenario 6

You have been informed that a director uses district-owned equipment on occasion and never pays for it. You mentioned it to him once and he jokingly said that the technician or administrator must be getting senile because they always forget to send him a bill. You have also heard that he buys seed through the district at cost while cooperators are charged a profit mark up.



Solution 6

BETTER

Discuss with the chairman and the administrator that directors do not receive free use of equipment or discounts on items the district sells.

BEST

Discuss during a board meeting that directors do not receive discounts or free use of equipment.

WHY

As public officials, directors may not benefit financially from their position.

Scenario 7

A couple of other directors are getting ready to attend the NACD National Meeting which is being held in beautiful Colorado Springs near the Rockies. They are bringing their spouses and encourage you to do the same. They say it's a great way to have a free family vacation since the district will be paying for the airline tickets, meals, registration, and motel for both them and their spouses. They invite you to come along and bring your spouse.



Solution 7

BETTER

Voice your concerns about the district paying for the spouses to attend.

BEST

Vote against the district paying for spouse attendance.

WHY

Since district money is public money, travel expenses should only be paid for directors who are attending on official business.

Scenario 8

One director is not a farmer and therefore does not have an agriculture tax-exemption card. You know they sometimes charge lawn fertilizer and other supplies at the local general store in the district's name. The administrator tells you not to worry about it; they say the director always reimburses the district.



Solution 8

BETTER

Discuss with the director and the administrator the problems this could cause both the director and the district.

BEST

Discuss in a board meeting the problems this could cause the district – including tax penalties and liability for unauthorized purchases.

WHY

The district must follow all tax rules and regulations; additionally, allowing unauthorized persons to charge to the district accounts is fraud.

Scenario 9

You notice that the district gasoline credit card slips show that the administrator is filling up their personal vehicle about once every two weeks and charging it to the district. When you ask them about it, they claim they must run many errands for the district in their own car, and that the directors have let them fill up at district expense for years.



Solution 9

BETTER

Request an agenda item to review this practice; the board should take action to set a monthly reimbursement amount for the use of the personal vehicle.

BEST

Request and agenda items to review this practice; the board should set policy that only actual mileage driven will be reimbursed at the current allowable rate. For reimbursement a mileage claim must be completed each month.

WHY

The district has opened itself up to misuse and fraud – there is no method in place to track what is actually being purchased.

BONUS ROUND

You ran into the district technician one afternoon at the farm store; they indicated that all their scheduled work for the day was completed so their workday was done.

You don't recall having seen a leave request form for approval of time off and at the next month's board meeting, their timesheet does not reflect those hours being taken as leave, but instead lists the day with a full 8 hours of work time.



Bonus solution

BETTER

Discuss with the technician and chairman the importance of properly reporting time.

BEST

Discuss with employees during a board meeting required work hours, work schedule, and how leave must be requested and reported.

WHY

Time and leave are money; the district should only be paying for hours that are being properly reported.

THANK YOU

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